775 553 that the same baby is returning. So, in order to induce him to remain on earth, they give him a significant name.

One of these is Yewayan (literally, "one who has returned"), meaning "Here he is, back again; it is he once more, and we recognize him."

The same name is used for all members of the same family.

304 Scars. When a child is a year or two old, the family calls in an old woman who draws more or less straight lines on his face (cheeks, chin, forehead, even the nose) with a razor. These marks vary according to region and are not [193] the same, for example, at Kaya as at Ouagadougou.

The design used most often, however, has three straight lines from forehead to chin and one or two horizontal lines running across the nose and joining the vertical lines on the cheeks.

853 782 Feeding. If a mother does not have enough milk, she goes very early in the morning to a tree, for example, the kamsaongo or wédega (of the family of gohine lianas), to ask for milk. She falls to her knees, and believing that she is addressing a living person, she makes her request humbly, but with what faith! It appears that the prayer is often granted, but the woman must never again go under the tree or she will lose her milk.

853 604 The question of choosing a nurse does not arise in Mossi country unless the mother dies. In that case, the little orphan is entrusted to a sister of the child's father. If she has been a mother, she too goes to the tree to ask for milk, as described above, even if her most recent delivery occurred years before. Finally, if the child thus nursed is a girl and survives, she becomes the property of her father's sister who will give her in marriage, later on, to the suitor of her choice.

III. Death

764 554 The importance of funeral ceremonies depends on the age and rank of the deceased.

Nitiema (aged persons). Upon the death of an [194] old man or woman, all the relatives who live in the village are assembled.

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554 The body is kept in the funerary chamber for a whole day, and then the burial ceremonies are begun. The eldest son and daughter in the family throw cowries in the tomb (1) so that their father

1. Different types of tombs. Among the Mossi there are several kinds of tombs. The yaobulga (tomb in the form of a well), the highly favored type, is reserved for all those, young or old, who die a natural death.

The sampogyaogo (from sampogré, "wound," and yaogo, "tomb") is rectangular in form and reserved for all those who die following a serious wound, snake bite, lightning, and drowning, or who fall on the field of battle. In these cases there is almost no kouré (funeral ceremony). Only the relatives shave their heads and receive visitors who bring them condolence. There are no celebrations or ceremonies. On the day of the second kouré, a little beer is served to visitors.

or grandfather may buy water "when he is thirsty and pay the tolls on the way to Eternity." The persons in charge of the burial take some of the cowries.

The relatives organize games and dances which go on for three or four days. Finally, everyone has his head shaved, and the date is set for the principal funeral ceremony. On that day, all of the relatives, sons, married daughters, close relatives, and grandsons, bring chickens, livestock, and cowries. All the inhabitants of the village are expected to prepare beer. Livestock and chickens are killed, and the meat is distributed to the people who come for the ceremony. Dances [195] go on for several days, and the dancers, as well as the drummers, receive cowries.

It should be noted that the grandchildren keep their chickens or livestock after slaughtering them and may dispose of them as they wish.

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[787] The sinddo is performed only at the death of an aged person. It involves cutting up a living animal whose meat, as soon as it is cooked, is eaten by all the members of the bereaved family. During this operation a strong person holds the animal's muzzle shut; it is believed that a single cry from the creature means certain death for someone in the family.

The tomb of aged persons has the form of a well at the top; it is rectangular below, or at least wider, so the corpse may lie in it.

Ikanda (married man). The ceremony is much less impressive for a young husband. The deceased is simply washed, wrapped in a Peulh secco, and buried. A few chickens are killed. There are no dances at the second kouré.

Heads of families. After the deceased has been washed, dressed, wrapped in a mat or secco, and [196] laid out on the threshold of his hut (1), the lagda (undertaker) offers him the blood

1. The venré (opening). We have already seen that among the nakomsé a hole was cut through a wall of the house or through the wall surrounding the courtyard and that through this opening the body was carried to its last resting place.

In general, this is done for the father of a family. The body is laid out by the opening, and his eldest son and all his daughters (the daughters of the deceased and those of his brothers) must pass through the opening ahead of the corpse. On this occasion the girls tie branches around their hips in lieu of skirts, and the son removes his loincloth. The children of the deceased are held by the arms and legs and put by turn through the opening, in such a way that their bodies brush against the corpse.

The eldest son, by passing safely through the venré, proves to those present

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that he did not cause his father's death. The daughters who dare go through the opening, even those who are grown women, are greeted with bravos by the crowd. The wives receive generous gifts from their husbands. The reason for this is that no girl who had been pregnant before being led to her husband would dare to pass through the opening because the deceased and other kimsé (ancestral spirits) would strike her dead.

This is why some women disappear at the crucial moment, to the great shame of their husbands.

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The funerary hut is fumigated by burning a certain aromatic plant known as sompiga. The Bambara and the Wolof call it benguefala or benguefira. The same plant was widely used by the Europeans during the recent outbreak of yellow fever, either in an infusion, in a tisane, or mixed with the shower water.

of chickens which are killed at his feet. He pronounces some ritual words which may be summarized as follows: "Accept these chickens and these cowries and do not return; may everything you leave behind profit your heirs!;" etc.

The body is then carried away. On reaching [197] the tomb, the bearers carry the corpse around it three times and then place the body on the ground. The undertaker goes into the tomb and arranges the sleeping place. The mat is removed, and the body is handed in to him. The members of the family and other relatives at once begin to weep as the opening is closed with a stone, and the whole is covered with earth.

The eldest daughter of the deceased and his wives cover their bodies with ashes. The pugtiéma (first wife) and the eldest daughter wrap leafy branches around their waists, and the rest of the family wear vines on their foreheads. This is the first mourning.

Forty or fifty days later the second funeral ceremony is held, accompanied by various games, the playing of tom-toms, killing

animals, beer, etc. (see the description above). This is the second mourning.

Dakonré (bachelor). Only his father and mother shave their heads. He is wrapped in a Mossi secco and buried without further ceremony. He is not even washed.

Bi-kouré (funeral for a newborn child). If the first-born child of a young mother dies, the girl returns to her family and remains there for thirteen days. Then she comes back to her husband, accompanied by some of her relatives. The latter bring chickens and guinea fowl to be served with the millet cake brought to the girl's husband. In return, the husband has chickens and guinea fowl killed and millet cake prepared, thus making an even exchange with his in-laws.

[198] Custom requires that the girl's relatives spend a night on the road before returning to their village. Even if their village is quite near they spend the night in the bush.

It should be added that if a second child dies at birth, there is no kouré.

Pagh'sin kataré biga (childless woman). There is no ceremony. She is buried in the same manner as the bachelor.

The Existence of God, Heaven, and Hell

The Moaga believes in the existence of a superior being, invisible or visible (the sun has long been considered as a "god" by many of them), who created the heavens, the earth, and all living things. This being is called Wende or Wenam (from wende, "world," and nam, "chiefdom"; thus, "Master of the World").

Although the Moaga sometimes attributes his misfortunes to the evil spells of his enemies, nevertheless he recognizes that nothing can be done without the consent of God. Hence he constantly invokes the name in every circumstance of his life, especially when he makes sacrifices.

Even the makers of fetishes, magicians, and sorcerers recognize this power and frequently invoke it.

There are certain Mossi who make no charms or fetishes and who are neither Moslems nor Christians. They harm no one, [199] forgive those who offend them, and attribute everything that happens to them -- for good or ill -- solely

773 According to tradition, he had beside him a toabga (a kind of
535 magic axe) and a tibo (a sacred object, fetish).
776 The people captured him and put him in a safe place. But of what possible use could he be to them? Nobody knew. [237] He was something unknown and fearful.

One day the people had gone off to hold the kouré (funeral observances) of an old man and were on their way back home. They were warba dancers. They were all singing as they approached the house of the waongo, who came out. The dancers were terrified and ran away. Only one of the singers had the courage to remain behind.

He went on with the songs and the waongo followed him right up to the house of the deceased, and there he began to dance.

From this it was concluded that the waongo had something to do with funerals. Since that time the waongo is summoned whenever an old man or woman of the Nioniossé (soukoaba) dies. He never dances for deceased young people.

Since the waongo or, rather, the soukou is considered to be sacred and to embody a sort of religion which possesses secrets
[198] that should not be made known to everyone, a special language -- a deformation of the môré [Mossi] language -- has been invented. It is understood only by the initiates.

535 The waongo dances to the sound of a special tom-tom, accompanied by songs and praises in the secret language. The dance is of no special interest; it involves more or less frenetic movements, such as characterize most of the dances of the indigenous peoples.

The waongo is always accompanied by a circle of young men dressed in a narrow strip of cotton, decorated with cowries, and carrying satchels at their sides. These boys make movements with their heads which [238] are precisely like those made by circus
[534] horses. In addition to the tom-tom, flute players (wissé) accompany the dances.

535 We shall now speak of the true funeral dance, called warba.
●764 It is performed by men wearing skirts, a kind of net shirt dyed blue, and headdresses made of cowrie shells. A long fringe, weighted

535 764 with metal and worn around the hips, distinguishes this costume from others. The movements of the fringe follow the movements of the body. It soon is revolving so rapidly that it looks like a top.

Many people, however, do not own the special costume just described, and they merely tie a blanket around their loins. During the movements of the dance, this produces a very comical effect since it looks like the wagging tail of a monkey.

[534] The musical instruments which accompany this dance are long tom-toms (gangando); some of them are narrower at the middle and look like long, thin spools for thread.

The dancers also accompany themselves with tiny metal instruments which are like Spanish castanets.

The dance itself is performed in a circle under the direction of the chief of the warba whose costume is [239] richer than the others. All of the dancers usually wear many charms on their [789] heads (tail of an ox and heads of birds stained with the blood of sacrificed chickens).

[775] The warba proves that the Mossi believe in the immortality of the soul. They believe that the dance is necessary to enable the soul of the departed to join the souls of his ancestors. They hope in this way to earn the good favor of the new spirit.

Thus, this dance has a moral basis. However, it seems that the same cannot be said for the other dances which are performed so widely today.

535 In addition to these three national Mossi dances, there are some other dances performed only by women and girls which are actually exercises in physical culture rather than true dances. We shall speak only of the principal one, the kiguibtobo ("dance of the bumping buttocks").

The kiguibtobo. This dance is performed by a group of women, usually at the beginning of cool weather after the harvests are in. The dancers clap their hands while singers raise their melodious voices. The dance is rhythmic. Two dancers leave the group and take their places in the center of the circle. They go back and forth, and then suddenly at a given point in the song [240] they turn back to back so that their buttocks touch and bump each other in time to the music. The dancers must be equally strong

586 It nevertheless happens, though very rarely, that the husband is unable to convince his wife and returns home alone. No one troubles the wife from then on, and her relatives give her full freedom. The grudge of the rejected husband may be persistent, however, and his vengeance frightful. The bride price is not returned; the husband should have known how to keep his wife. It is nevertheless acknowledged that the children born of the union, boys or girls, belong to the father, and he does not fail to claim them when they are grown, or if they run away to their mother.

564 467 Negro populations often contain caste groups, set apart from each other by tight barriers. The most outstanding of these are the rules prohibiting marriage between members of the same caste or between those who belong to a caste and those who do not. Such prohibitions do not exist among the Mossi, except in the sense mentioned earlier. Although three caste-like groups exist among them, drummers, smiths, and undertakers, they are castes only in the sense that those who do not belong to such a family cannot exercise the profession. It might be more accurate to call them guilds.

533 [534] The drummers (binda) are those who play the bindré, a sort of large gourd with an aperture about 40 centimeters in diameter and covered with hide. Only those who belong to the drummers' family may play on this drum, which apparently is peculiar to the Mossi, but anyone may play on the other drums. The drummers are present [782] at all sacrifices offered by the naba; on Friday, the day of sacrifice, they go and pay their respects to him. When sacrifices are offered, they are entitled to the head of the victim. They are present at all [764] burials, where they play their drum and receive a remuneration which varies with the wealth of the deceased. If it is one of their members who died, they receive neither cowries nor food. They go to war [727] with their drums. If they are so unfortunate as to be made prisoners, they are never sold but ruthlessly killed; this is done either to prevent them from going back into the fray and stirring the warriors to sack the village, or because no one would want to buy them since they belong to a naba who would retaliate against their captors, or for both reasons at once. The drummers are the country's griot, a term hallowed by custom. They know the genealogy of every naba and sing his praises. Each province chief has a number of drummers and never travels without taking some of them with him. At other times they go to /34/ the market and follow the best-dressed people, singing

763 old man passes away. Suddenly, a shrill and lugubrious cry uttered by the first wife pierces the air and announces to everyone that a soul has just left its body and appeared before God. All the women rally to this call, and for a few minutes the most plaintive laments fill the dead man's soukala.

764 767 Silence is soon restored. One of the family members fetches the undertaker, lada, without whom it is impossible to proceed with the burial. Meanwhile, one of the séko which enclose the inner courtyard is torn off to permit the soul to get through and leave the living in peace. An old woman and the dead man's children proceed to lay out the corpse, using only their left hand. The body is washed with warm water and vigorously soaped, then annointed with karite butter. The head is shaved and the hair buried, unless the shaving was done before the dying man breathed his last, in which case the hair is tossed to the wind. When the corpse has been thoroughly washed, the undertaker softens the joints of the neck, arms, and legs so the body will slide more easily into the pit; then he lays out the body in the hut of the first wife if she is still alive, otherwise in the hut of the dead man.

764 The corpse is laid out on a mat, on its side in the position of a sleeping man, with arms and legs folded, and covered with a white blanket. As soon as the body is laid out, lugubrious cries are heard once more, and the men and youths go to dig the pit while the women remain sitting in the courtyard and watch the corpse. Women friends and neighbors prepare food for the family which has been visited by death.

The grave is usually dug in the family field, where the ancestors already rest. The villages have no common graveyards; /69/ each family has its own. Nevertheless, the vicinity of a sacred grove is sometimes used as a cemetery. To be buried away from one's relatives is a great misfortune, and one who dies far from his village strongly desires that his body be returned there; the family always fulfills this last wish if at all possible. Otherwise, the dead person is buried along the road that leads to his village. In order to rest near his ancestors in his last sleep, a native who feels that his strength is ebbing may build his huts in the middle of the bush, at the place where the village of his ancestors used to stand. An old man esteemed and loved by his family is buried in front of the soukala, and this is the rule for nabas.

The undertaker prescribes the shape and size of the grave, but anyone may dig it. Mossi graves consist of a circular pit about 1.50

764 meters in diameter and 0.70 meter in depth. At the bottom of this first hole or against the wall, a second pit is dug, 0.75 meter in diameter. The bottom of the second hole is enlarged to form a sort of chamber, 1.50 to 2 meters in length and 0.75 meter in depth, where the body will be laid. This chamber is plastered with a preparation of néré to make the inner surface very smooth.

Young men spend the whole night at this task. Meanwhile, friends and absent relatives hasten to the house of the deceased as soon as they hear of his death; drummers also come, on the lookout for a few jars of beer and a few cowries. Everyone dances, sings, and makes merry.

764 765 The children and younger brothers of the deceased wear mourning clothes: an ample apron with a large pocket, adorned with cloth streamers and various designs on a red or blue background; a small gourd as head covering; a circle of ashes on the face, and a cross of ashes on the back. The daughters and sisters of the deceased wear in addition a bunch of leaves in the back and thin white cotton cords around the neck. The eldest son wears a sheep skin across his chest and over the shoulder. At dawn the millet beer comes, the millet 764 mush is ready, and they are taken to the men who dug the grave. The undertaker tosses a little beer onto the soil removed from the pit and mixes it with some millet mush. Then the merry-making comes to a halt, and everyone drinks, eats, and rests for a while. Sometimes the dancing is taken up again around noon. When the sun dips toward the horizon, the burial gets underway.

An opening is made in the hut where the dead man lays, and the corpse is removed through it. The body is laid in front of the hole, and every one of the dead man's children must pass through and step over his father's corpse. The body is then laid on a stretcher, but not tied as yet; it is taken back into the courtyard, through the opening left by the séko which was removed at the moment of death. The eldest son now draws near with a goat or chicken, according to his means, and gives it to the undertaker who offers it to the deceased by shoving it forward three times and saying: "Your son offers you this goat, so it will bear kids for you." The other children may also present offerings, as well as the friends, /70/ and the undertaker offers them all to the deceased in the same manner. In some localities, the animals thus presented are taken home by the undertaker, who kills [184] and eats them, and no sacrifice is made on the spot; elsewhere the victims are killed near the corpse.

●764 When the last chicken has been offered, the body is wrapped in a very pliant mat and bound tightly to the stretcher. The funeral procession gets underway. The women and children walk ahead of the body, and the friends and village people follow with the drummers. If the deceased was an important person, horsemen join the procession and guns bark. If the deceased was the head of the household, the procession winds around the soukala three times. Women, who are never heads of a household, are not granted this honor. Then the procession goes toward the grave in a roundabout way, passing by the favorite spots of the deceased: an old woman, for instance, is taken to the place from which she used to fetch water and to the marketplace where she went to sell grain. The drummers bang away, everyone shrieks, sings, and exchanges insults so coarse that no one was willing to repeat them to me. The procession comes to a halt three times if the deceased was an old woman, twice if it was an old man, and the noise rises to a new pitch.

When the procession reaches the grave, everyone stops for the last time and becomes silent. The stretcher is lowered, and the relatives utter a subdued and melancholy chant: "May the chief of hatred (the being who killed the deceased) depart!" The body is laid out near the pit. One of the undertakers, who alone may bury someone who died of illness, stands in the first hole, and another waits in the funeral chamber to receive the body. The cords which bind the corpse to the stretcher are cut, and the mat removed. Those undertakers who are not occupied at the moment stretch blankets around the pit to hide the body from the onlookers. The man in the first hole seizes the corpse and passes it on through the opening of the funeral chamber to the second undertaker, who takes it in his arms, lays it on its side on a mat with the head toward the south and facing east in the case of a man, west in the case of a woman, with the arms and legs folded.

As soon as the corpse has vanished, the blankets are removed, and the eldest son steps forward. He offers the dead man a mourning [801] apron, in the pocket of which he has placed 444 cowries in the case of a woman, 333 in the case of a man, or even 4, 444 or 3, 333, according to his means, and the undertaker presents them to the deceased, saying that his eldest son is offering him cowries to buy drinking water (to be translated as beer). He also offers clothing: for a man, two pairs of trousers, two shirts, two blankets, and a cap, if he wishes to do things lavishly; and blankets in the case of a woman, some to

764 be worn, others for carrying jars or to take to market. A woman is also offered a gourd to cook sauce, along with pepper, spices of all sorts, and salt. In addition, she is given the spindle that she used to spin cotton, but first its stem is broken; in fact, everything which is offered to the dead is previously damaged or torn. Wealthy friends also present clothes, and the others toss cowries to the dead. The undertakers carefully cover the smaller hole with blankets to prevent the cowries /71/ from falling into the pit. Every once in a while they allow a few to slide down, but they keep the greater part to themselves. When everyone has tossed in his offering, the undertakers take one, two, or several pieces of clothing; this is their share, and the practice is sanctioned by custom. They also take a few handfuls of cowries from the mourning apron, and someone hastens to count them. All eyes are anxiously focussed on the person who counts them, [80] 787 for either a man or a woman will die soon, depending on whether the number of cowries comes nearer to 333 or to 444.

Finally the undertakers close up the pit. If the deceased was an old woman, the smaller opening is plugged with one of the large jars in which she prepared millet beer; if a man, it is covered with a small jar or sometimes, especially if the opening is larger, with sticks laid as close together as possible. The corpse is thus completely isolated in its funeral chamber. The larger hole is then filled up with the soil removed from the pit. A jar and an earthen sauce pot are placed on top in the case of a woman, an earthen pot and a large stone in the case of a man.

Everyone withdraws to drink, eat, and rest. There is no dancing that night, but they make up for it on the following day and even on the day after that, if the wealth of the deceased permits it. On the second day after the funeral in the case of an old man, on the third day for an old woman, the children and younger brothers of the deceased shave their heads, go to thank those who have helped them, and remove their mourning clothes. There will be no further preoccupation with the deceased until the anniversary festivities or koure.

[184] Such are the ceremonies which usually attend the death and burial of a married man or woman, those who have children. We say "usually," for all these complex ceremonies may be curtailed and modified to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the region and the customs peculiar to one family or another.

775 it aside to return it to the soul when it leaves the body. From this
[735] comes the thank-you wish, "May God repay you!" If the deceased led an evil life, if he was quarrelsome or a thief, if he killed, he is condemned to walk over live coals to reach God, or if he is a murderer, he may come to God only after he has drunk all the blood he has shed, which God has saved for this purpose. The major offenders are detained by the treetops and never reach the place of souls. It must be said, however, that most Mossi take little heed of the penalties which may await them in the other life or deny their existence altogether.

The souls go to Bourtenga, the "gathering place of the souls," according to the etymology of the word, a place of indeterminate geographical location, or they go to Pilimpikou, a mountain located
775 in Kipirsi country. Their sole occupation over there is to go to market
764 at night, and this is why on the day of burial the deceased is given cowries so that he may buy millet beer and clothes in order not to look like a tramp.

The souls are white but otherwise they look like men, although they are nimbler and can move effortlessly and with great rapidity
[264] from one place to another. They do everything upside down; they eat with the left hand and do with it all the things we do with the right, and this is why the corpse is washed with the left hand. They wear their clothes inside out, with the pocket of the breechcloth facing in; they carry the spears iron downward, and they walk backwards because their eyes are placed behind their head. This is why the kourita who represents the deceased wears everything inside out.

775 The souls of the animals sacrificed to him, chickens, sheep, goats,
769 beeves, etc., go to join the deceased, who can thus feast, invite friends, and gather kin together, for people are reunited up there. Although nabas are no longer such, those who were subject to them on earth recreate their court. It is said that parents come to fetch their children, /87/ nabas their pages and favorite wives, and friends their friends, unless the survivors treat them very well and provide them with lots of food.

Indeed, the souls of the dead come back to earth to receive the gifts which are offered to them, to drink the blood of the victims sacrificed in their honor and the millet beer prepared for them on the annual Day of the Dead (basra). This is why no Mossi faithful to tradition ever drinks millet beer without first pouring a little on the

302 husband by legacy; while men are shaved only when they receive their first wife, because then they become masters of a hut, but they are not shaved when they get new wives because their status does not change again. A man who is appointed naba must lose his hair which was that of a subject and no longer suitable to a chief. A dead person [764] may only be buried without being shaved if he died an accidental death, etc.

789 The cross also plays a role which must not be overrated, but which is nevertheless real. The hilts of swords bear the shape of a cross; the feet, hands, and chest of the sick are often anointed with charcoal mixed in fat, always in the shape of a cross. The chests and backs of soukala dwellers are also marked with crosses to protect them against lightning. The huts are marked likewise, and crosses are drawn even inside the mouths of horses and donkeys. A cross is also drawn on the hut door of those who are seriously ill so as to ward off evil spirits. A cross of ashes on the chest and back is part of the mourning costume.

What is the origin of this custom? The natives cannot say, and invariably reply, "This is what our fathers did."

In addition to these superstitious practices that do not commit one to anything and that harm no one, there are others which can be very useful to /101/ those who practice them, and others yet which seem indeed to fall into the category of magic. We are referring to what the natives designate by the generic name of tim, without differentiating between true remedies of medicinal origin and superstitions or evil spells which should be characterized as magic. Indeed, it is often quite difficult to distinguish between the two.

755 Amulets and charms are tim to the natives, and so are the medicines which their specialists prescribe and which seem to have real effectiveness. We mentioned them briefly when we spoke of illness. We did not say that the preparation of these medicines rarely goes unaccompanied by some sorcery, and that the person who has been cured by a remedy must at least keep some in a little bag and sacrifice a chicken to it every year. Everything is done as in the usual sacrifices, but the invoking formula is replaced with the following: "God-tim, stretch out your hand and take this chicken. God has given me a powerful medicine. May this medicine protect me night and day, in the middle of the night and on the path, where we amuse ourselves and in the huts. Keep the jaws of the snake shut so that next year I may still be in good health, so that no misfortune may come to me,

771 their traditional fear. Nevertheless, Captain Lambert says that
648 prior to the French occupation, Moslems were forbidden by the
[798] Moro Naba to /585/ say their prayers (kella) publicly. They merely recited their rosary (séki) silently.

797 Since the French occupation, the Mossi have lost all their prejudices against Islam, because they have been conquered by a different foe. In addition the Moslems tell them, as they do everywhere else in West Africa, that the Whites will only be vanquished and will only leave the country when everyone has become a Moslem. This leads the Mossi to start salaaming, and actually it is probable that there have been more conversions to Islam among the Mossi since our occupation than prior to it. This result, which may appear strange at first, is indubitable. Actually these conversions, although more numerous than they used to be, are still rare if we consider that the enormous majority of the Mossi population and the territory as a whole remains fetishistic.

781 Let us proceed to a description of Mossi religious customs. First, the funeral ceremonies.

755 When a Mossi is ill he summons a soothsayer (bara in Mossi). The latter takes some earth and looks at it to see what will happen to the sick man. Then he states either that the latter will get well, on condition of obliging with a sheep and a chicken, or else that he will die. In the first case the requested chicken and sheep are brought to the bara, and then, if the sick person gets well, he gets something else, a sheep or 5,000 cowries. If the sick person dies, contrary to prediction, the family merely says that the bara was a liar and nothing else happens.

764 If the deceased is a man, it is the family elders who care for him. They stretch his limbs and even his fingers so he will not turn rigid immediately, and they close his eyes. Then one of the elders washes the corpse with cold water in the presence of the whole family. After this, the elders sew a shroud with cotton bands to wrap around the deceased, and then he is rolled up in a mat.

The soukala chiefs (we know that among the Mossi every household head is the head of a soukala) are buried in the courtyard /586/ of their soukala, or else before its gate. The grave diggers are fetched, and they dig a hole the size of a man, lay the corpse at the bottom, and place boards above it to prevent the soil from weighing

764 down on the chest of the deceased. Then they spread out on the boards a layer of clay, and add earth until the hole is filled. A small canari is placed on the grave to mark its location.

Other members of the soukala are buried around it in the maize field. A canari is also placed upon the grave. The same applies to slaves. Only people stricken with sleeping sickness are buried [766] in the bush, to prevent the spread of the disease.

The deceased is buried on the morning following the day of his death. The heir of the deceased soukala chief and the family elders kill chickens upon the grave. They take the animals by the legs and crush their skull on the floor of the grave. This is the liturgical procedure for such killings. Nine chickens are thus killed [536] in succession and set aside to be eaten. If the soukala is wealthy, sheep are killed instead of chickens. They are seized by their hind legs and their head is struck three times on the floor of the grave, then their throat is cut with a knife. The souls of all those animals go to the deceased.

On the night following the burial, people people play drums, shriek, dance, shoot guns. When day breaks everyone returns home to wash, rest, and eat. Then they return when the sun sets, and this goes on for three successive nights.

765 When the ceremony is over, the date of a new reunion is set for 30, 40, 60 days or even a year later. This second ceremony is often made to coincide with the time of the millet harvest. The children of the deceased have their heads shaved. Much to is prepared. The sisters and daughters who have married away come on the date set, bringing sheep and dolo. The family and the whole village come to greet the successor of the deceased soukala head, to drink and to eat. The griot and large drums are sent for. People make music, dance, sing, and drink for two days, and /587/ this time there is no weeping. This second reunion ends the funeral ceremonies occasioned by someone's death.

769 The Mossi have a yearly feast for their dead and their ancestors. It is the Tiougou or Bassara, which is also called Péléga in other areas. This feast is celebrated in December, when all the millet has been harvested and the cold weather has come. The family and soukala heads have much dolo prepared and pour it onto the graves

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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he received from them. This unequal exchange, plus the nobles' prerogative of seizing the wives of pagans, contributed to the increase of the Moslems.

The conversion of Mossi to Islam is sometimes accompanied by a rupture in the relationships between persons involved in "friendships" with a view of obtaining wives. A great quarrel developed in the district between a pagan chief and a recent convert who refused to give the chief a daughter promised as a wife. The chief became furious and claimed that the Moslem had broken a promise made years ago, but the Moslem claimed that it was against his new religion to give his daughter to a pagan. It is not true that Moslems in the village do not exchange wives with pagans, but the Moslems often try to convert their pagan friends so that the brides will not have to revert to paganism. The chief's difficulty was that he could not become a Moslem because of his ritual and ceremonial relationship with the ancestors. The Moslem men do not have such difficulties with their pagan wives because most women follow their husbands' dictates in religious and other matters. Many Moslem men attempt to prevent their wives from having sacrifices made to the ancestors, but if a woman really wishes such a sacrifice she can easily have it arranged through her pagan relatives. If a woman married to a Moslem refuses to observe Islamic practices, she is liable to divorce and runs the risk of having her children taken away.

Mossi anxiety over children is often instrumental in converting them to Islam. When a woman is barren or her young children die, she consults a soothsayer (*barga*). She is either told that her Tengkougre benefactor was not amply rewarded and recalled the children, or that her "Moslem" children (children who wished to be Moslems) were angry because they were given pagan names. In the latter case she is advised to make a gift to a Moslem and to ask her husband to build a Moslem prayer-circle outside his hut so that when her children "return" (are born again) they will see it. Finally, she is advised to give all her children Moslem names. I could discover no reason why the pagan soothsayers advise these anxious parents to adopt Islam, except that they hope that complicated prescriptions will be more efficacious. Nevertheless, so effective is this technique for gaining converts to Islam that even members of the family of the chief pagan priest are not immune to it. Furthermore, once a woman has a Moslem child, all her other children must be Moslems or they will die. A man whose children are all Moslem has no recourse except to adopt Islam if he wants a funeral, because his Moslem sons may not give him a pagan funeral.

Every Mossi, whether Moslem or non-Moslem, wishes a proper funeral, and now that travel has increased the fact of being Moslem or pagan is of great importance. Many young migrants to Ashanti have reported that their dead pagan comrades were unceremoniously disposed of, while the local Christians and Moslems took care of their dead coreligionists. But despite this fact, and the belief of administrators and missionaries, I found no evidence that the seasonal and other migration of Mossi youth to Ghana and the Ivory Coast have contributed very much to the spread of Islam. It is true that some of the thou-

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

chief. If he was not qualified then one of his younger brothers, or one of father's brothers or uncles was chosen. Yet, the fiction of equal access to the *nam* was important to the Mossi because it enabled them to adhere to their most important political axiom which was that "The only man who should rule is one who can keep the country." Regencies were avoided, and persons with physical and character defects were barred. Moreover, this flexibility gave the electors a wide choice of candidates from which to choose the person best fitted for chieftainship at any given period. The Mossi have always believed that it is difficult to rule men and this is what they mean when they declare: "Nanamsè toumdè ya yida fa fa"—"The work of the chiefs is the most difficult of all."[3] For example, it does not seem like an accident that the first ruler, Moro Naba Wubri, was succeeded by four of his brothers in turn instead of by his sons. The Mossi had not completely conquered the territory, and the young sons were incapable of handling the complex political situation. The graves of each of the successors to Wubri in different parts of the country remain as markers to testify to the difficult task which the early rulers had in controlling their realm.

The Mossi believed, and still do believe, that it was only when conflict developed after a ruler died, that the people realized how necessary and valuable a chief was. The death of a chief, especially of the Moro Naba, was kept a secret until the war minister arrived at the capital with his troops. Only then did the cry go up: "The fire has gone out!"; and as soon as it was heard, violence broke out throughout the land. Prisoners were released, thieves rifled the markets, and the *nakomcse*, or nobles, rode about the countryside doing whatever they wished. This custom persisted as late as 1942. Reporting to his superior in Abijan about the events that transpired in Wagadougou when Moro Naba Kom died, the French commander wrote: "On Friday, March 13, 1942, young people, profiting from old custom, tried to steal things, but they were stopped and about one hundred were arrested."[4] Throughout all the chaos which attended the death of a king, the war minister remained calm unless an attempt was actually made to seize power. He never attempted to stop the public disorder or to catch thieves or murderers, because everyone believed that out of

the Tansoba, the members of the royal sub-lineage, and the district chiefs. The Tengsoba of the Ouagadougou area was also notified. Because he was a descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi population that "owned" the land, he supervised the burial ceremony.

The Mogho Naba's death was kept secret, and no mourning was allowed until the Crown Prince had arrived at the capital and the Tansoba had recruited an army to protect the realm against would-be usurpers of power. Then the cry was raised in the palace, to reverberate throughout the land, that "the fire had gone out." Once the ruler's death had been announced, the country was plunged into an interregnum, which was characterized by ritual and often by actual anarchy. The people in the towns immediately looted the markets and stole their neighbors' goods; the prisoners and captives in stocks were released by their guards; the nakomce in all the territories, districts, and villages subjected the local populations to robbery and pillage; and the members of the monarch's babissi began their intrigues for power. The traditional sanction for this anarchy was that only when people suffer during the breakdown of political control do they really appreciate the sovereign's role. The Mossi declare (with some truth) that no one was safe during the interregnum. However, as we shall see, the ruler was symbolically kept alive, and the country was never without effective political leadership.

When the Tengsoba arrived at the palace, he was joined by five hereditary funeral chiefs: the Pazany'tengsoba, the Tampouy Naba, the Benghin Naba, the Toghin Naba, and the Tanghin Naba. In the ceremony that followed, he gave permission for the royal grave to be dug. Meanwhile, the ruler's body was prepared for burial in the traditional manner by his female relatives and laid in state in the zongo. These women kept vigil over the body, shouting and weeping. Only the five ministers of the realm and the male members of the ruler's babissi were allowed to pay homage to the corpse within the zongo. All other mourners had to pay their respects to the monarch's eldest daughter, who, as Napoko, was dressed in the dead sovereign's clothes and sat in his place before the zongo. As her father's symbolic representative, she held daily court and received greetings and homage from all visitors until a new ruler was chosen. The drummer who sat by her side declared to all visitors, "You say that the Mogho Naba is dead! Well, who is that sitting there? Tell me! Is that not the Mogho Naba?"

The ruler was buried the day after he died, at the end of an elaborate ceremony. Libations were poured out to the ancient rulers, and sacrifices made to them. All the important officials and members of the royal mini-

Wobogo. However, he did not have to intervene, because while still en route he heard that Ouagadougou had fallen."[28] Thanks to this type of aid, the Mogho Naba was able to gather quite a large army, a fact that contradicts Crozat's belief that the Mogho Naba was a "king without an army."[29]

The early Mogho Nanamse used to accompany their armies into the field, but this practice was later abandoned and was revived periodically only by the more adventurous rulers. (The last ruler to die in warfare was Mogho Naba Doulougou [ca. 1800].) However, it was the Mogho Naba's duty to greet the army when it came to Ouagadougou, to beat the royal war drum, and to turn the troops over to the Tansoba. This officer served as commander in chief of the army, and was assisted by the Gounga Naba, a provincial minister, who served as his aide-de-camp. The Gounga Naba was expected to die rather than retreat in battle, especially if the Tansoba was killed. Two other ministers, the Kamsaogho Naba and the Larhalle Naba, also accompanied the army. The later Baloum Nanamse did not venture into battle, because they had to attend to the personal needs of the Mogho Naba. In early times, however, they accompanied their sovereigns into battle and fought alongside them. The Ouidi Naba never went to war, because it was his duty to look after the kingdom. He had to ensure the interests of all the people even if the royal army was defeated, the country invaded, and the ruler killed or forced to flee. The Samande Naba went to war and served as chief of the infantry.

Scouts preceded each district contingent as the army marched off to battle. Within the contingent, the younger warriors marched in front, followed by older men. It was the duty of the more experienced warriors to make sure that the younger men did not break ranks and run under the stress of battle. Behind the foot soldiers came the cavalry, composed of nobles and of the few commoners who possessed horses. Behind these came the district chief, surrounded by his own palace guard. Several heralds known as *yumba* (sing. *yuma*) accompanied the district forces to exhort them to fight. As the men marched to battle the yumba shouted:

> Men! Your ancestors were not slaves. They were men. They were stronger than anyone else. They did not bathe with water; they bathed with blood. Do you wish to return home to drink millet water and eat bread? Never! A man does not eat bread or drink millet water; a man fights. Your ancestors were not afraid of anyone; you must not be afraid of anyone. Even if you are killed today, you must march ahead, beat your enemies, and take their villages. You must not be afraid!

Mossi armies on the march used scouts to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy or for any evidence that he was aware of impending attack. The tactics these scouts used to avoid detection, such as camouflaging themselves

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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726 with leaves and branches and crawling upon the ground, can be witnessed
764 even today at Mossi funerals where men re-enact warfare practices. Whenever possible, the Mossi preferred to take the enemy by surprise, but this was seldom possible when large-scale fighting and massive preparations were involved.

When two Mossi armies drew up to each other, the heralds from both sides issued such challenges and epithets as: "If you men do not wish to die, you should run or you will never eat again. We will have your blood to wash with." In the meantime, the Tansobadamba on both sides deployed their forces in accordance with the number of men available, the spirit of
723 the enemy, and the nature of the terrain. From the description of warfare given to me by an old Tansoba in Nobere district, it appears that the strategy most commonly used was to split the infantry in two while attacking, thus making room for the cavalry to charge through. If the initial charge was successful, the attack was maintained, but if it failed, the army usually turned about and fled. Despite their braggadocio, Mossi commanders seldom insisted that their troops fight against overwhelming odds.
644 However, shame over impending defeat often induced such officers as the
645 Tansoba and the Gounga Naba to fight to the death. For example, during the war between Boulsa and Fada-N'Gourma in 1897, the Boulsa army lost so many men that the Boulsa Dim wanted to commit suicide in his humiliation. However, he was prevented from doing so by one of his subordinates.[27]

Soldiers wounded by poisoned spears or arrows extracted the projectiles if possible, and kept on fighting until they died. Even if they were wounded
789 by an unpoisoned weapon, they did not seek medical aid. Most wounded men believed that they were doomed, because their protective amulets had
727 failed them. For the same reason, a defeated army fleeing a battlefield made no attempt to retrieve its dead and dying, but left them to the vultures. When an army was victorious, however, the Mossi either carried their dead home for burial or buried them on the battlefield, saving some item of their clothing or equipment for the funeral.

Victorious Mossi armies usually pursued the enemy, burning villages as
648 they went. The soldiers killed all the infants and the infirm, and when they
567 fought against non-Mossi, they captured young people to be sold as slaves. Then they collected all the available booty and departed hurriedly, fearing
727 that the confiscated cattle and slaves would slow their return and enable the rallied enemy to catch up with them.[28] If the army could not return home before dark, camp was set up for the night near a body of water so that the Tansobadamba could offer thanksgiving sacrifices. Pickets were later